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UNCLAS BOGOTA 004649

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: COM'S RESPONSE TO EDITORIAL CHALLENGING AERIAL COCA
ERADICATION IN NATIONAL PARKS

REF: BOGOTA 4612

1. (U) In response to national leading daily El Tiempo's editorial May 16, "Not in the Parks," (Reftel) affirming that aerial eradication in national parks would lead to irreparable environmental and human damages, COM provided the following response published as a letter to the editor in the same daily on May 17.

BEGIN TEXT:

"I read your May 16 editorial on coca aerial eradication in the parks with disappointment, especially the assertions that adequate safety precautions are not taken or that glyphosate might be in violation of international treaties to protect the environment.

I enclose the Executive Summary of a 143-page, multi-year scientific study on glyphosate published by the OAS six weeks ago, which is also available on the embassy web site (<http://bogota.usembassy.gov>). Page 15 contains the key conclusion: 'el glifosato y el Cosmo-Flux tal y como se usan en el programa de erradicacin de Colombia no se presentaban un riesgo significativo para la salud humana...se consider que para el ambiente y para los animales terrestres los riesgos del uso del glifosato y Cosmo-Flux era pocos o nulos...se recomienda que se mantengan las prcticas de aplicacin actuales de la aspersion para la erradicacin....'. [QUOTE IN ENGLISH: ...glyphosate and Cosmo-Flux as used in the eradication program in Colombia did not present a significant risk to human health...for the environment, risks from the use of glyphosate and Cosmo-Flux to terrestrial animals were judged to be small to negligible...it is recommended that the current application practices for eradication spraying be retained... END QUOTE IN ENGLISH].

It is difficult to see how a respected international organization could recommend continuation of a practice that violated international agreements. More to the point, since more than 85 percent of the glyphosate in Colombia is used by commercial farmers, not in the eradication program, El Tiempo either should call for total ban of one of the most popular, environment-friendly herbicides in the world or accept the scientific evidence. Simply opposing its use in national parks makes no sense."

END TEXT

WOOD